

Remarks of Lt. Governor Becky Skillman
7.21.09 WIndiana Conference

Good morning and welcome to the second WIndiana Conference!

I thought we were doing well last year, when our first-ever WIndiana conference attracted more than 300 people. But this year, 600 of you have come out, and more than 50 sponsors and exhibits are here. That's progress!

I want to thank the Indiana Wind Working Group and Purdue University for joining with our states Office of Energy Development to make this conference a success. And, I want to thank you all for being here, and for your investments in the incredible opportunities we have in wind power.

This is Indiana's only statewide energy conference. And I hope each of you will benefit from the sessions, tours, and networking opportunities we've organized. This is going to be an exciting couple of days, and I hope you can return home with a fresh perspective, and renewed motivation to make Indiana wind power the best in the nation.

STATE OF WIND ENERGY

Back in April, during "Wind Energy Week in Indiana," we celebrated the newest addition to the state's wind-energy team. Hoosier Wind Farm in Benton County is one of many wind farms helping to make Indiana the fastest-growing state for wind energy.

It's possible, that by the end of 2009, Indiana could move past such traditional wind-producing states as South Dakota and Wyoming. We are already ranked the fastest-growing state for wind energy last year, and we ranked 6th for manufacturing job-creation from wind power development. And according to a recent report from The Pew Charitable Trust, the number of clean energy jobs in Indiana grew by nearly 18 percent from 1998 to 2007. That puts Indiana first in the industrial Midwest for overall job growth in the clean energy economy. And that means a lot, not just to the energy community, but to the business community, as well.

Wind farms put down a tremendous economic footprint. Indiana's 11 wind manufacturing facilities are employing more than 1,000 Hoosiers, and stimulating business throughout our communities. The wind farms in Benton County, for example, have encouraged the economy in neighboring Tippecanoe County, boosting business there by an estimated \$20 million a year.

Real estate, construction, and manufacturing sectors are all getting a leg up – even education is benefiting from wind energy. One educator in particular – John Zakelj, an Environmental Science teacher and a panelist in one of our break out sessions – John is doing great things in Randolph County. With an Alternative Power and Energy Grant from our State Office of Energy Development, and support from Performance services, the School Corporation, and Union City, John is bringing wind and solar power to the classroom. Thanks to his work, Randolph Eastern plans on pursuing a full-scale wind turbine on school grounds – potentially enough to power the K-12 school. And Union City has plans for one of its own, as well.

I have to say, I'm impressed with John and the movement he's started. I hope it's one we'll see in other communities across the state. It's thinking creatively and working cooperatively to solve energy issues, local government issues, education and economic issues – what a fantastic example of partners in progress!

We live in uncertain economic times, and projects like this are providing an important push forward for Indiana. I'm incredibly proud of the motivated, forward-thinkers who continue to explore Indiana's capacity for wind energy. They're taking another step into the future for all Hoosiers.

Indiana has what it takes to be a NATIONAL energy leader. We're proving it over and over again. We've made Hoosier Homegrown Clean Energy a priority. And we have the potential to be a powerhouse of wind energy production.

We may be famous for corn and cars, but one of our most abundant resources is wind. Indiana's wind volume is perfect for serious production that could easily serve major markets in North America. The opportunities would mean a lot to our state.

As the technology improves, wholesale markets increase, and as green energy becomes more valuable, Hoosier wind companies will be able to sell into markets with higher electricity costs. So, wind producers will be able to find the best markets, and the best return on their investment, without jeopardizing Indiana's low electricity rates.

Indiana has the potential to develop as much as 40,000 megawatts of onshore OR offshore wind – thanks to our unique position as a land-locked state bordering a great lake. North and North Central Indiana abounds in “low hanging fruit” for wind developers – (they're the communities with the greatest wind resources, of course.). And wind developers are looking in other areas throughout Indiana for POTENTIAL development. Right now, there's wind development going on, at some level, in 15 Indiana counties.

We're already home to the largest wind farm east of the Mississippi – BP's zero-emission Fowler Ridge Wind Farm in (Benton Co). We expect that facility ALONE, to generate enough carbon-free electricity for more than 120,000 homes. The Fowler Ridge Wind Farm, and all the other wind development in Indiana has also been done WITHOUT a Renewable Electricity Standard (RES), another point of pride for our producers and the state.

So, the state of wind power in Indiana is strong and promising. Our workers have the right skills, and we have the right attitude – one that welcomes business and innovation with open arms. Our manufacturing base is ideal for the wind industry. Our geographic position is perfect to meet national green-energy needs and demand. We have a great combination for a booming industry.

Major energy investors ARE taking notice. The Italian company, Brevini, has plans to open its first American facility in Muncie, invest nearly \$60 million, and provide jobs to nearly 450 Hoosiers. And the German wind turbine manufacturer, VAT, plans to locate the company's US headquarters in Delaware County, creating 120 new jobs.

With companies like these working to solve our energy problems, I am looking forward to a stronger, more prosperous future for Indiana.

And state government will continue to be a helping hand to those who are working toward that same goal. Our Utility Regulatory commission, Department of Environmental Management, and Office of energy Development are there for you. Feel free to use as a resource. We work hard to earn the trust of every partner who invests in our state.

CONCLUSION

We all have some big responsibilities right now. But if we do our jobs right, Indiana will continue to be a national leader in energy.

I want to thank you for the meaningful way you are contributing to Indiana's economy and our energy needs. We all have a part to play in the long-term economic recovery of our state. And right now, we need good people like you who want to get Indiana moving and make us stronger than ever.

I'm confident that we'll see the return of a booming economy because we have people like you working on it every day. Indiana's growth, energy development and economic development are ultimately in your hands. You are the ones who care about the future of our communities and future of our state. You are a big reason Indiana we'll see a complete economic comeback, and remain a leader in wind power.

Thanks so much for being here today, and enjoy the conference!